

Book reviews

A Handbook of Venereal Diseases. By WILLIAM M. PLATTS. 2nd ed., 1974. Pp. 120, 5 diagrams. Peryer, Christchurch, New Zealand (\$2.50)

The second edition of this little handbook has been increased in size by 31 pages, thus doubling the space allocated to gonorrhoea and other sexually-transmitted diseases, and this is to be welcomed. There still remain several notable omissions, such as a description of gonococcal proctitis and the value of cervical exfoliative cytology in the investigation of a vaginal discharge.

The laboratory tests for syphilis are described with clarity, but the regime advised on p. 64 for the screening of apparently healthy people appears to be time wasting, especially in the case of pregnant women. As the author advises that 10 ml. of blood be taken for these tests, sufficient serum should be left, after performing the initial screening tests (and I should prefer the Reiter protein complement-fixation test rather than a Wassermann reaction to be used in conjunction with the VDRL), for the FTA-ABS and/or TPHA test to be carried out on the same specimen, rather than repeating the screening tests on a second specimen and only then carrying out a specific test. Many would suggest that the FTA-ABS and/or the TPHA test should be done in every laboratory offering a serological service for the diagnosis of syphilis, rather than only in reference laboratories. The FTA-IgM test is included in the diagnosis of neonatal congenital syphilis, but no mention is made of its prognostic value in early and late acquired syphilis.

With regard to the treatment of herpes genitalis with IDU in DMSO it should be noted that a 40 per cent. solution is available and a warning given of the dangers of the solvent. Mention might also have been made of the one-session treatment of pubic lice with a lotion containing 0.5 per cent. malathion and of scabies with a lotion containing 1 per cent. each of dicophane and gamma benzene hexachloride. Despite the fact that more effective and less dangerous pessaries are available, S.V.C. vaginal tablets are still recommended as a local treatment for trichomoniasis.

There are a number of errors: thus low sensitivity of serological tests (p. 59) leads to false negative, not positive, results, while low specificity gives false positive rather than negative results; three lines from the bottom of page 71 'female contacts' should read either 'male contacts' or 'contacts of females'; the TRIC agent is not a virus (p. 113); in the Index (p. 117) the reference for the IgM fluorescent antibody test should be to p. 45 and not to p. 95. These errors could have been corrected by

careful proof reading as could a number of mis-spellings.

This handbook will be of help to medical students, but the information on the diseases other than syphilis is not comprehensive enough to be of value to medical practitioners who treat cases of sexually-transmitted disease themselves and do not refer them to the appropriate clinics.

C. B. S. Schofield.

Baillière's Medical Transparencies. No. 9 Sexually-Transmitted Diseases. 1. Venereal Diseases. C. S. NICOL (1974) 24 colour transparencies. Baillière Tindall, London (£5.50 + VAT 46p in U.K.)

The majority of hospitals in Britain have photographic departments and coloured slides of common clinical conditions can usually be obtained for teaching purposes. However, in clinics for sexually-transmitted diseases, patients with important and interesting lesions frequently attend outside normal office hours and because of the efficiency of modern treatment the lesions often disappear rapidly. This makes it difficult for some of the less common conditions to be photographed and for the transparency library to cover all aspects of the subject.

This small booklet contains 24 slides illustrating the common lesions found in patients with syphilis, gonorrhoea, and chancroid. The definition and colour is of a high standard and the slides will serve a very useful purpose in augmenting existing departmental collections. It may well also form the basis of a new collection for those starting in the specialty of genito-urinary medicine.

The slides are described in a small booklet, with an introduction about the sexually-transmitted diseases and their treatment.

Two small criticisms of the presentation of the slides may be made. Firstly, the lesions illustrated are not printed on the slide concerned and reference has to be made to the booklet in order to confirm the type of lesion presented. Secondly, the slides are mounted in thin cardboard mounts which are fragile, require individual focusing in a projector, and tend to jam in the less sophisticated type of projector. Most current slides can now be kept in plastic mounts with great advantage. Apart from these two suggestions, this is a very valuable contribution to the teaching material available about sexually-transmitted diseases, and I believe that everybody working in this subject who is responsible for seminars, discussion groups, and lectures should own a set.

R. D. Catterall